Carving out a new role: the UIA after the Second World War

Chapter 4

CARVING OUT A NEW ROLE: THE UIA AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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After the death of its founders Henri La Fontaine in 1943 and Paul Otlet in 1944, it was uncertain whether the Union of International Associations would be able to resume its activities once the Second World War had ended. The only concrete step was the installation of Otlet's lawyer, Jules Polain, as provisional administrator in May 1945. La Fontaine's bequest provided funds to relaunch the Union, but there was no apparent urgency to spend the money. On the contrary, the court order appointing Polain contained the possibility of a total liquidation of the organization.[1]

The tide turned in the spring of 1948, after the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) commissioned UN official Lyman C. White to promote the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As part of his activities, White paid a visit to Brussels, where he sought to convince Polain and his associates that the Union could occupy a special place in the new global order of international organizations. He urged them to launch a new international journal and suggested that financial support from the United States might be available. Within a few months, the Union was brimming with initiatives. Four hundred questionnaires were dispatched to international associations. Georges Patrick Speeckaert was taken on as secretary and sent to America to lobby for the Union. In January 1949, the UIA's first *Monthly Bulletin* – featuring the recurrent promotional reference: 'founded in 1910' – was published.

It was clear that White's suggestions were taken seriously and greatly helped to revive the UIA. It proved, however, difficult for the Union to integrate effectively into the transnational scene of the post-war years. Whereas in this period, as Akira Iriye argues, transnationalism 'was being fortified with a strong organizational base', the Union struggled to acquire a sound financial basis and to find its place among the growing number of international (non-governmental) organizations.[2] The central aim of this chapter, therefore, is to find out why the UIA had such difficulties in (re-)establishing itself as a hub of international non-governmental organizations after the Second World War.

This core question leads us to take an inside-out view of the Union, reviewing its various initiatives and evaluating the role of the organization's leadership, but also to scrutinize – outside-in – the constraints that the national and international environment imposed on the Union. Our account, in other words, is a multisited, transnational history in which the UIA's institutional development, the interests of the Belgian state, the structuring effects of ECOSOC and the half-hearted response of private American foundations are the main topics. Between the end of the Second World War and the summer of 1948, the UIA was waiting to be brought back to life. Once it had regained strength, the Cold War had taken a firm grip on Europe and the world. This worked out badly for the UIA, which tended to portray its endeavours as apolitical and scientific. In the early post-war period, the UIA had neither the means nor the passion to enter into special relations with the countries behind the Iron Curtain. More generally, its contacts beyond the West were mostly indirect. It only established more effective collaborations with what has become known as the Global South after decolonization had gained ground.

The chapter first locates this case within the historiography of post-war internationalism. It then zooms in on the formative years 1948–52 when the Union reconstructed itself amid a parade of national and international actors, both individuals and organizations. We pay particular attention to the organization's quest for money. Finally, we highlight publications through which the Union tried to push history and science as allegedly neutral vehicles for its larger objectives. In the conclusion, we suggest that the difficulties facing the Union in the late 1940s and early 1950s had lasting effects on the 'survival journey' of the organization up until today.

Internationalism Revisited

A focus on internationalism bears the temptation to highlight success and concord across borders, yet it cannot ignore undeniable setbacks. The present-day world is, after all, hardly the utopia some internationalists had in mind for the 'peoples of all nations'. Rather than merrily write about the virtues of cooperation and doing-good, historians increasingly speak of alternative internationalisms – a heading that also covers non-liberal and 'dark' varieties.[3]

The UIA's re-appearance of the Union from 1948 onwards is an interesting case in this historiographical reorientation. Just as it was difficult for the Union to create a role for itself after the Second World War, it is not easy for scholars to place the Union now. It is remarkably absent from the old and new histories of post-war internationalism, except perhaps as the producer of knowledge about these organizations.[4] It clearly does not belong to the class of alternative, non-liberal internationalisms recent scholarship has focused on. However, whereas the Union's goals were firmly embedded in liberal-democratic ideas about global order, it was unable to benefit from the boom of reformist transnational activities in the late 1940s. This 'new internationalism', aptly described by Iriye, was characterized by the proliferation of international organizations, many of which were non-governmental, dealing with cultural exchange, peace, human rights, environmentalism and developmental assistance, while helping to forge a global community.[5] The UIA related to all of this, but only at a secondary level. Since its birth, it had wanted to be an information centre for what with the UN Charter came to be known as international 'non-governmental organizations'. Following the conventional definition of the term, the Union itself is also an NGO but, while transnational single-issue organizations and movements mushroomed after the war, the Union itself struggled to survive.

Researchers have emphasized different aspects when evaluating the nature of post-war internationalism. The Union does not play a prominent role in any of these accounts, but its vicissitudes speak to all of these scholarly perspectives. Akira Iriye has sensitized us to the importance of transnational relations, especially of persons, ideas, memories and cultures, as distinct from international relations and national interests in the traditional sense.[6] In his recent history of NGOs, Thomas Davies has highlighted a 'complex but broadly cyclical pattern of evolution' of transnational civil society from the Second World War until the present day.[7] Mark Mazower has underlined American realism with regard to international institutions such as the UN.[8] Glenda Sluga has brought back nationalism and national interests into the history of internationalism.[9] Wolfram Kaiser and Kiran Klaus Patel have called for taking into account 'multiple connections' when studying cooperation and competition among international organizations and NGOs in post-war Western Europe.[10]

When applying these lenses to the UIA, its precarious position becomes all the more evident. It was one of the many transnational organizations trying to carve out a role in an international order that saw the advance of the UN but was dominated by the United States. The Union sought to consolidate its political and juridical position by obtaining consultative status with ECOSOC, but remained toothless in the face of the hardening Cold War. In order to secure its finances, representatives of the Union came knocking on quite a few doors of affluent American foundations. At home, the Belgian state proved to be a rather unreliable supporter of the UIA. Whereas prominent politicians recognized the importance of keeping its headquarters in Brussels, the Union often came away empty-handed when asking for additional funding or suitable accommodation.

'Follow the actors' is one of the methodological directives that has emerged from the literature on transnational history. With no apparent interconnection, a similar approach has made an appearance in the study of NGOs in international relations (IR) literature. DeMars and Dijkzeul, for example, have sought to better understand the politics and practice of NGOs and, thereby, renew IR theory. Whereas we are less concerned with fine-tuning IR theory, we gratefully make use of their methodological imperative to 'follow the partners' (although we prefer 'actors') and of the interlinked conceptual touchstones: practice, bridging and power.[11] Through the practice of finding and connecting actors and by forming networks, NGOs try to bridge divides in world politics, such as the division between state and society, public and private, the national and international sphere and normative and material aspects of power dynamics. Without aspiring

to accomplishing the entire research agenda of these IR scholars, we use their core concepts to write a critical history of the UIA in the immediate post-war period.

Accordingly, we follow a number of actors from within and outside the Union in the crucial period between 1948 and 1952. We foreground their hopes, aims, journeys and meetings in order to understand what they were achieving through their interactions or, at least as frequently, what they did *not* accomplish. 'Bridging', for that matter, is always a tentative endeavour, sometimes leading to increasing power but often also to failure. For our multisited history, we rely on multiple sources. The Union's publications are clearly not sufficient to understand what happened behind the scenes. In order to study the practices of international relations in and around the Union, we gratefully used the archives of the Union in Brussels. This allowed us to follow the activities of its long-term secretary-general Georges Patrick Speeckaert. We also gained better insight into the involvement of other protagonists, notably Paul van Zeeland and Aake Ording, through their personal archives in Louvain-la-Neuve and Oslo, and Oskar Leimgruber through the Swiss Federal Archives in Bern. It is plausible, of course, that relevant information about other actors is available in archives around the world.[12]

High Hopes and (Mildly) Bitter Fruits

During 1946–7, several Brussels-based international organizations – including the International Institute of Administrative Sciences and the (soon to be renamed) International Colonial Institute – resumed their activities. The ideas sustaining these bodies had remained vivid in various countries during the war, and their agendas seemed more pressing than that of the UIA, which needed an external impetus to get things going. The incentive for the UIA came from the UN, which in 1946 started to attend to the matter of consultative status of NGOs as stipulated by Article 71 of the UN Charter. This article enabled NGOs to participate in the activities of the UN and thereby enhanced their prominence in international relations. In May 1948, the first general conference of NGOs having consultative status with the UN was held in Geneva. The Union was conspicuous by its absence, which must have surprised Lyman C. White, then secretary of the NGO committee of ECOSOC.

White had obtained his PhD in 1933 from Columbia University, having written a doctoral thesis on 'The Structure of Private International Organizations' and devoted a few pages of his study to the Union. He had studied at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva in 1929–30 and, since then, had spent longer periods in Europe.[13] As he wrote in his thesis, the Union 'had practically ceased to exist as an organization grouping international organizations together' by the early 1930s.[14] He did, however, warmly welcome the UIA's purpose of furthering cooperation among international organizations, and mentioned that he would return to this subject matter 'in some later work'.[15] Back in 1933 he could hardly have foreseen that twelve years later – in a very different world – he would

embark on a career in the Secretariat of the UN and directly affect the future of the Union.

In 1948, as secretary of ECOSOC's committee on NGOs, one of the organizations he talked to was the UIA, by then hardly more than an echo from the past. The founding fathers had deceased, and their successors did not know what course of action was most advisable in the new global order. White, however, understood the UIA's potential function as *trait d'union* for NGOs around the world. For the Union, White's visit was a wake-up call. On 28 July 1948, Jules Polain – in his capacity as the UIA's interim administrator – convened a provisional executive committee to resume its activities.

The composition of the Provisional Committee reveals that in 1948 the Union still largely relied on ideals from the past. The committee members were in their late fifties or older, and mostly represented the scientific internationalism of the interwar period. Polain (1892–1951) himself was an attorney in Brussels who had been active in the Centre Belge d'Études et de Documentation, established in 1941 to anticipate the end of German occupation and the post-war recovery of Belgium.[16] He was well connected to influential circles in Brussels that pursued strategies confirming or even bolstering the place of the Belgian capital in the world.[17] He asked the former Belgian prime minister Paul van Zeeland (1893–1973) to chair the committee, while Count de Jonghe d'Ardoye accepted to be interim secretary-general. Other committee members were prominent representatives of international organizations that, like the Union, had already established a seat in Brussels before the war. Octave Louwers (1878–1959) was secretary-general of the International Colonial Institute. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and now ambassador Fernand Muûls (1892–1981) was a member of the Institute of International Law and the Institute of International Relations. Emile Vinck (1870–1950) was secretary-general of International Union of Local Authorities, whose earlier cooperation with the UIA is discussed in Wouter Van Acker's chapter. Edmond Lesoir (1874–1966) was secretary-general of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, of which the only foreigner on the committee, chancellor of the Swiss Federation Oskar Leimgruber (1886–1976), was president.

New élan was needed to carry out the programme of rejuvenating the Union. First of all, Polain and Van Zeeland secured the support of the municipality of Brussels so that they could take up residence in the Egmont Palace, a prestigious building (today housing the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) where the organization would stay until the end of the 1950s. More importantly, Georges Patrick Speeckaert was recruited to serve as head of the secretariat. For a while, he combined this function with administrative secretary of the International Colonial Institute. In 1952, he was appointed to the higher-status role of UIA secretary-general – a position he would retain until 1970. Speeckaert, a devout Catholic, had studied law in Louvain, had been a prisoner of war in Germany, and had been active in the Resistance movement. As head of the Department of Social Services of the Red Cross, he had been committed to the rebuilding of Belgium after the war.[18]

Speeckaert's priority was finding domestic and international support for the UIA's activities. The preliminary planning included drawing up an inventory of its archives, preparing the revival of the *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale* (which would become the *Yearbook of International Organizations*), publishing a *Monthly Bulletin*, providing a calendar of international meetings and organizing a survey among international organizations. In order to secure continuity, the UIA needed to acquire new funds, but more importantly, it also had to formalize its relationship with the UN in order to be recognized as a player in the new international system. Everything, in short, depended on money and status. Annoyingly for the Union, the two were closely connected: when in November 1948 Speeckaert undertook a journey to Paris to meet Howard E. Wilson of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and then president of the Interim Committee of Consultative Non-Governmental Organizations (established by ECOSOC), in order to discuss possible financial support, he was told that a decision would only be taken once the Interim Committee had reached a conclusion about its consultative arrangement with the UN.[19] Without some form of UN recognition, it would be very hard to convince important foundations to make donations to the Union.

After his visit to Paris in November 1948, Speeckaert travelled to Geneva in December, accompanied by Polain, talking to representatives of the UN and non-governmental organizations. It became clear that they had better not beat the big drum. Bertram Pickard, attached to the Liaison Section Non-Governmental Organizations of the European Office of the UN, was not convinced that this was the right moment for the Union to start spreading its wings. He recommended that Speeckaert and Polain wait for the final report of the Interim Committee. In a note of December 1948, Pickard more forthrightly stated:

> The fact that the Union which had made so promising a start before World War I proved unable to fill this role between the World Wars suggests that a Centre in Brussels probably could not now be effective for this general purpose [i.e. general cooperation among NGOs]. In any case, this question of general cooperation between NGOs is already under careful consideration by the Interim Committee and it is important that no similar initiative be taken which would complicate this study.[20]

Pickard's note ended with the suggestion that the Union should not seek to become a representative body for international cooperation, but rather a study and publication centre independent from individual NGOs. As founding father and director of the Federation of Semi-Official and Private International Institutions Established in Geneva, Pickard was hardly a neutral observer, as his organization in some way constituted a rival to the Union. Yet his view carried weight in ECOSOC circles, and he eventually convinced others, including the UIA's cadre, to follow his line of reasoning. White too had to acknowledge that a cautious strategy was the more promising option, and that the Union had better concentrate on a role as service and information centre, as he wrote in a letter to Speeckaert in December 1948.[21]

Speeckaert kept close track of the developments within the Interim Committee. In the spring of 1949 he travelled to America to attend meetings of the committee at Lake Success in New York (where between 1946 and 1951 the headquarters of the UN was located). Wilson allowed Speeckaert to sit in on the meetings and to share the Union's views. Speeckaert understood what was expected and pointed out that, for the time being, the Union would limit its activities to 'documentation, information, study and publication'.[22] His talks with other UN representatives and members of NGOs in New York reinforced his opinion that the Union would have to develop into some kind of secretariat *for* NGOs rather than an official federation *of* NGOs.

The Interim Committee and the Union held each other in a tight grip: the Union felt ill-advised to step off the beaten track, whereas the committee was gradually drawn into the idea that it had to give the Union at least some sort of recognition. The two years following the Lake Success meeting were dominated by a carefully orchestrated negotiation process towards granting the Union consultative status with ECOSOC, which formally took effect on 18 September 1951.

At the second general conference of consultative NGOs (29 June to 2 July 1949), held in Geneva, Speeckaert and Polain got to know Aake Ording of Norway, who had prepared a personal memorandum on relations between NGOs. Later in July, Ording came to Brussels for an unofficial meeting with Speeckaert, Polain and Van Zeeland, and was joined by Howard Wilson of the Interim Committee, Max Habicht and Anne Winslow who, like Ording, had undertaken a study of the consultative process and inter-organization relationships of NGOs. Baron Hervé de Gruben, secretary-general of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also present, underlining the weight the Belgian government attached to manoeuvring the Union on the right track. The meeting focused on figuring out how a reorientation of the Union might result in an international service centre for and about NGOs – a plan that had been taking shape in Ording's head.

Between July 1949 and the end of 1950, the Union worked on updating its statutes from 1920, aligning its mission and organization with the post-war reality. At the General Assembly of February 1951, its official name became 'Union of International Associations. Service Centre for International Non-Governmental Organizations', which confirmed the approach laid out by the Interim Committee and Ording.[23] In the meantime, ECOSOC had rewarded the Union with some sort of formal recognition by expressing its 'appreciation of the value and usefulness of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* published by the Union of International Associations'.[24] More importantly, it decided not to give further consideration to the publication by the UN itself of a handbook concerning NGOs, thereby giving the Union – for the time being – a monopoly of this anchor-hold for its activities.

Despite the good news about the *Yearbook* and the promise of consultative status, the Union could have hoped to gain more from the Interim Committee. A section of Habicht and Winslow's report for the Interim Committee was withdrawn before the third general conference of consultative NGOs in June 1950. It was no accident that this was exactly the part dealing with an international service centre. Apparently, there were fears in Geneva that too close a collaboration between the

Interim Committee, the international NGOs and the Union in Brussels would weaken the central role intended for ECOSOC in the implementation of Article 71. It was fine for the UIA to get a piece of the cake, but evidently not more than that.[25]

For the UIA, international recognition was conducive to obtaining funding from the Belgian government. Although its relationship with the Belgian government had never been smooth, it was clear that the Union would not survive without state subsidies. Moreover, as the Union's supporters never tired of repeating, the organization greatly contributed to the international reputation of Brussels, which had suffered dramatically from the German occupation. La Fontaine's legacy and a few private donations helped to defray the costs of the Union's re-establishment, but if it had not been for a subsidy of 300,000 Belgian francs in 1950 – 65 per cent of the total budget in that year – the Union would have probably gone under.[26] Over the years that followed, the Belgian state continued to subsidize the Union, even though the amount slowly decreased and by the end of the 1950s its contribution to the overall resources was less than 10 per cent.

The Quest for International Funding

Although the Belgian government helped to keep the Union going in the early 1950s, the UIA aimed to stand on its own feet. Once the path to consultative status was sufficiently passable, the question of funding took centre stage. When Lyman White visited Brussels in 1948, he had already pointed to American resources that in his opinion could be tapped. Given the lack of investment capital in Europe for international non-governmental projects, it seemed indeed smart to try the transatlantic route. Ording thought he could play a key role in this quest for money. During the Second World War, he had spent much time in London, first as secretary to the board of directors of the Bank of Norway, then as division head of the Norwegian ministry of Supply and Reconstruction. In that capacity, he became involved in the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). In 1947, he was appointed director of the United Nations Appeal for Children. Ording was therefore well versed in UN-coordinated international cooperation, when in 1949 the Interim Committee asked him to conduct a study on the relations between NGOs. His idea to create a service centre for international NGOs seemed to match the profile the Union had already begun to promote.

Below the surface, however, tensions and hostilities between Ording and the Union staff were simmering from the start. In his report for the Interim Committee, which Ording completed in May 1949 – so before meeting Speeckaert and others – he had not set high hopes for the Union. 'The Second World War', he wrote, 'destroying parts of its facilities, meant a serious setback for its work, and its location and limited organizational backing make the Union inadequate to solve alone those problems which have to be faced today.'[27] When, not long thereafter, he got in touch with the Union staff, 'prominent people and experts in the field' warned him against engaging with the organization, which 'was said to be out of date in its methods, too limited in its composition, and with little or no

activity since the German occupation of its offices during the war'. Ording himself, however, thought at the time that there was sufficient common ground between them. He expected that 'the weaknesses and the limitations of the UIA as it then existed could be overcome' and that he could render useful services to that end.[28]

Ording strongly believed that the Union would have to raise its ambitions, and that he could be its front man. Even before the meeting of 20 July 1949 in Brussels between the members of the Interim Committee and the Union, he had drafted a rough outline of future cooperation, based on a conversation with Van Zeeland, in which he did not shy away from adding a touch of self-promotion. Whereas he was willing to concede that 'the facilities allready [*sic*] available and the work allready [*sic*] started by the Union' were most useful, they should be greatly increased, 'and that the contact, plans and support developed by Mr. Ording can be most usefull [*sic*] to this end'. He put himself forward as the ideal person to establish 'an international Committee of outstanding individuals' to sponsor and direct the work of the international service centre he had in mind, and 'to make special investigations as to the possibilities of financial support'.[29]

Encouraged by Van Zeeland's apparent support, Ording immediately set to work and began lobbying for his idea of Union wherever he went. He regularly contacted the Brussels headquarters, not so much to receive instructions but rather to lay out his own agenda. In October 1949 he wrote to Van Zeeland from Geneva, complaining that he had understood from Leimgruber – the Swiss member of the Union's Provisional Committee – that the latter was not in favour of trying to raise funds from private sources, exactly the opposite of what Ording had in mind.[30] As evidenced by his next steps, Ording ignored this opinion and continued his efforts to obtain funding, in particular in Scandinavia, if only 'through contributions from institutions and organizations in Norway, Sweden and Denmark to have financed my own work and travel during the next ¾ of a year'.[31]

In this part of the job, he succeeded brilliantly. In September 1950, he proudly sent in an overview of the subsidies he had collected over the past year, featuring sums from the Nobel Prize Committee and the Christian Michelsen Institute.[32] These subsidies were paid directly to Ording, and not to the Union. He assured Polain that every Norwegian Kroner had been used for the benefit of the centre. From the correspondence between Ording, mostly writing from Oslo, and both Speeckaert and Polain in Brussels during the period between September 1949 and October 1950, it appears that the latter two were keen on first settling affairs with the Belgian government (securing funding) and with the Interim Committee (preparing for international status), whereas Ording wanted to move on and immediately establish a sponsoring committee composed of highly reputable politicians. While Speeckaert was sometimes taken aback by Ording's activism, and was afraid that the outside world would think there were two Unions, Ording despaired of ever getting the Brussels base to advance.

Once the dust of the third general conference of consultative NGOs in June 1950 had settled and the support of the Belgian government was secured, Polain, Speeckaert and Van Zeeland became more willing to give Ording a chance. Funds were put aside for an allowance and a travel grant so that he could make his

long-awaited journey to the United States. Habicht, who was becoming a trusted adviser of the Union's staff in Brussels, thought that this investment would pay itself back in due time.[33]

Whereas the UN and its agencies were amply funded by the United States, and European states could benefit from American support through the Marshall Plan, the hope of NGOs such as the Union mainly lay with obtaining private funding. In this field, American actors were leading, too. Christophe Verbruggen's chapter in the present volume has noted the UIA's earlier quest for support from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. After the Second World War, large philanthropic foundations continued to be an important source for financial backing for civil society efforts. At the same time, as Inderjeet Parmar, John Krige and Ludovic Tournès have shown, they were a key means of extending and consolidating American hegemony during the Cold War.[34] The 'Big Three' foundations (Carnegie, Rockefeller and Ford) were deeply involved in US foreign affairs, international relations, science, and peace and democracy initiatives – in particular if they served American interests. As noted earlier, two representatives of the Carnegie Endowment, Howard Wilson and Anne Winslow, played a prominent role in ECOSOC discussion on its work with NGOs.

Ording's first visit to the United States took place from 18 October to 8 December 1950, in a period of sharp international tension as a result of China's intervention in the Korean War and heavy losses of US and UN troops. He had been made secretary-general of the UIA, side by side with Polain, so that he could act with some authority. The 'most important goal for us to shoot at', was the Ford Foundation, Ording wrote.[35] The Ford Foundation, established in 1936, was about to expand its funding programme and had asked Paul Hoffman to become the new president. Ording happened to have met Hoffman earlier in 1950 in Oslo, when the latter was still the head of the Economic Cooperation Administration, the agency administering the Marshall Plan.

Despite his high hopes regarding the Ford Foundation, Ording visited a large number of UN staff, diplomats, politicians, trade union leaders, professors and businessmen. He had prepared a memorandum on the proposed service centre for international NGOs, emphasizing the importance of these organizations in the development of democracy and in the system of international relations that was taking shape:

> Democracy is the sum total of the activities of innumerable organizations representing all facets of man's life. On the national level this interplay of organized forces has reached a high degree of development. On the international level the development of democracy is contingent on a corresponding international evolution of cooperating social forces and groupings.[36]

He received a lot of well-intended advice and names of other people to get in touch with, but only a few of those he met were willing to talk about money, and all of them were dismissive. Joseph E. Johnson, president of the Carnegie Endowment and Lindsey F. Kimball, vice-president of the Rockefeller Foundation, made it very

clear that their organizations had other priorities and that support for the Union was out of the question.

The Ford Foundation therefore seemed like Ording's best shot. He met with Hoffman in New York on 9 November. The future president (his appointment was not yet official) squelched Ording's plans in a few minutes. The Ford Foundation, Hofmann explained, was just then entering upon a strategy study, which was not expected to be completed before mid-1951.[37] And he added that the foundation was not out for exchange of factual information only: 'Propaganda or promotion may not be the right words but … something of the kind is needed to expand our freedoms.'[38] Whether the UIA would ever be able to deliver on this, he left open, but between the lines he made perfectly clear that it would be difficult for the UIA to fulfil his criteria in the immediate future. The increasing threats of the Cold War required a bolder stance than the UIA was willing to adopt.

Ording, however, remained optimistic. Reflecting on what he had accomplished, he wrote to Brussels that he was 'leaving this country with the feeling that something substantial has really been achieved'. He admitted that he 'was not returning with cash in my pocket', but insisted that he was 'looking for long term and more serious solutions'.[39] In their responses to Ording, Speeckaert and Polain remained confident that his efforts would be rewarded, but they must have felt disillusioned by the poor results. Ording continued to try to get through to Hoffman and 'the American … psychology in these matters', hoping that the Ford Foundation would eventually come across generously.[40] He did his best to address Hoffman's doubts regarding the UIA, and even alluded to the fear for the outbreak of another major war:

> In this case the program of the Center would need to go outside the limited field of services in techniques, administration and general information within the existing framework of slow growth. A dynamic program would have to be developed, aiming at the promotion of basic common purposes and at making the vast non-governmental structure an efficient means for winning democracy's world struggle for survival.[41]

Awaiting war or peace, Ording paid a visit to Britain to try his luck there. Again, he got in touch with politicians, administrators and businessmen, but he had to admit to Polain that 'the immediate financial results were surely humble indeed'.[42] He also liaised with UNESCO staff in Paris to make sure that their initiatives in the field of knowledge transfer would not cut the ground from under the Union's feet and to find out whether subsidies from its side were possible. As Speeckaert expected, at this early stage the attempts to attract UNESCO funding proved fruitless. The Union did, however, obtain consultative status with UNESCO in 1952.

To top the disappointing news about funding options, a letter of April 1951, from Hoffman himself, informed Ording that the Ford Foundation would not accede to the Union's request:

> Rightly or wrongly, we concluded that our first programs should be limited to projects which are aimed at contributing toward the solutions of crisis situations

> in the world. In every case our endeavor is to see that these efforts will be of long-range benefit.

Hoffman kept the door slightly open by promising to have another look at the proposal at a later date, when the foundation's plans would be more fully developed.[43] It was true, on the one hand, that the Ford Foundation initially engaged itself heavily with concrete Cold War issues, in Europe and Asia, and that it prioritized American organizations.[44] On the other hand, the overview of funded projects in 1951 shows that several international organizations in the field of education and research did receive grants.[45] The UIA, however, was not thought to become a key player.

Ording persevered in the face of these setbacks. First of all, he secured some funding for himself from the Norwegian Parliament. Quite bluntly, he wrote to Polain that he was willing to transfer the money to Brussels to cover urgent expenses, but that in that case he would step down to seek employment elsewhere. If he could dispose of the money himself, he would continue his work for the centre.[46] Polain, whose health was failing rapidly, did not have much of a choice. He therefore allowed Ording to plan another visit to the United States. In December 1951, Ording went on another fundraising tour to New York. It appeared that Lyman White had worked out an independent proposal for the establishment of what he called an 'International Organization Service Office in New York City at the Headquarters of the United Nations'.[47] This idea corresponded with a plan that Elisabeth Mann Borgese, youngest daughter of Thomas Mann, had developed to organize a world congress of NGOs. Mann Borgese was involved with her husband, the antifascist exile Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, in the federalist Committee to Frame a World Constitution, and closely connected to Robert M. Hutchins, then associate director of the Ford Foundation.

Although Ording realized that the initiative of White and Mann Borgese might transcend the scope of the service centre he had in mind, he was thrilled by the fact that the Ford Foundation had reappeared on the radar. They sat down to draft a memorandum on the establishment of an INGO Foundation. Even when White stepped out of the project at the last moment, Ording did not waver and called in the help of Habicht, who happened to be in New York. While waiting for a first reaction from the Ford Foundation, Ording continued lobbying for a Union-style service centre, and met with political and business leaders to raise support. Shortly before New Year's Eve he returned to Norway, leaving further negotiations to Habicht.

Upon his return, he received the sad news of Polain's death, which left the Union's leadership in a temporary vacuum. In view of the growing uncertainty about the UIA's future, Ording had accepted a temporary job as member of the Norwegian Delegation to the General Assembly of the UN held in Paris early in 1952. While, for the time being, Ording retained his position as UIA secretary-general, the relations rapidly turned sour. The Ford Foundation declined the proposal of Mann Borgese, Habicht and Ording, which pulled the last plug out of potentially fruitful cooperation between Ording and the Union. Behind the

scenes Van Zeeland tried to gather old loyal supporters to create a new basis for the Union. He wrote to Leimgruber that he had understood from Polain that the latter had grave doubts about Ording, owing to the fact that he had made no effective contribution to the Union, and that it became clearer and clearer that his efforts were focused on realizing his personal agenda.[48] Meanwhile, Ording felt that he was being sacrificed for the lack of new subsidies from outside Belgium. 'When things go well', he wrote to Mann Borgese,

> everyone is happy. When an effort fails there is always a need for a scapegoat. And those who are against the whole broader aspect of the NGO work, the congress a.s.o., have now taken the opportunity to launch their attack, based on the failure of the application to the Ford Foundation.[49]

Scapegoat for the Union's inner circle, tragic hero in his own eyes – in the summer of 1952 Ording accepted a position in Norway, and left the Union.

While the dissension between Ording and his colleagues in Brussels became quite personal at times, it boiled down to a fundamental difference of opinion as to what kind of organization the Union should aspire to be. Whereas Ording tried to curry favour with American funders and held that the UIA would have to become more audacious and dare to take a political stance, Speeckaert, Polain and the members of the Executive Committee judged the Union should stick to the role of provider of impartial and 'technical' information. With this, the UIA filled a niche, but not one that would attract a lot of political and financial support. After the rejections for American funding, it was clear to them that the organization should play to its proven strengths.

Advancing Internationalism

The Union was a small organization that had set itself a herculean task. During the years 1948–52 highlighted in this chapter, its Brussels secretariat employed only a few people: a part-time secretary-general, a part-time secretary, and three or four assistants and typists. In 1952, the Union opened offices in Geneva, London and Paris, but these were largely paper constructions staffed by people who had their main employment in other organizations. In Geneva, for example, the job was temporarily done by the lawyer Raoul Lenz, a collaborator of Habicht.

With this relatively small staff, the Union managed to bring off a surprisingly visible output. First and foremost, the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, for which the Union is widely known, neatly fitted in with the strategy of presenting itself primarily as a service centre. It was not always easy to gather the material that was needed for the yearbook, but at least it was an operation that the Union had some experience in and could carry out without having to take an overtly political stance. ECOSOC acknowledged the Union's lead in collecting solid information about NGOs around the world, and was glad not having to organize this from scratch or rely on inaccurate data. In 1948 and 1949 a Swiss editor independently

published an *Annuaire des organisations internationales / Yearbook of International Organizations*, but this endeavour met with quite a bit of criticism. The 1950 edition came out in collaboration with the Union, which took full responsibility as from the 1951–2 volume onwards.

In terms of time investment and accountability, the publication of a monthly bulletin was arguably a more arduous task. The bulletin offered a platform to leaders and scholars of international organizations, allowing them to publicize the cause of international cooperation in the post-war world. In one of the first issues, for example, Lyman White made the case for peace 'through the promotion of the common interests of humanity, by organized international action'.[50] These types of appeals were evidently grist to the Union's mill. Through the periodical it hoped to continue pursuing its long-established policy of promoting knowledge transfer for the benefit of international associations and developing an 'international mentality'. The Union was keen to steer clear of politically sensitive issues, and thereby remained faithful to Otlet and La Fontaine's original message of how the exchange of neutral information could by itself lead to peace.

Between 1948 and 1952, two elements stood out in the editorial policy of the bulletin, which echoed the voices of Otlet and La Fontaine: the emphasis on the history of internationalism, in particular of the UIA itself, and the promotion of a science of international exchange. To start with the first, the recurrent reference to the foundation of the Union in 1910 in the header of the *Monthly Bulletin*, was a conscious choice to keep in touch with the origins of the organization. When the Union resumed its activities in mid-1948, the letter it sent to international associations started by highlighting the achievements in the first twenty years of its existence. The *Bulletin*'s first issue also referred to the historical model by explaining the vision of its founders as well as the ongoing relevance of their work. In 1951, the bulletin featured an article by E. A. De Bevere, principal of the International People's College in Denmark and a former collaborator of Otlet and La Fontaine. He held that their ideas had not lost their original significance and that the threat of 'twilight of civilization as we know it' could be averted by international associations, 'the active, dynamic, intellectual, moral and spiritual vanguard of humanity, which in the opinion of the Founders of the Union, they ought to be'.[51] Such high-flown discourse, typical of the international peace movement of the early twentieth century, continued to appeal to Speeckaert and others in the Union's inner circle.

At the same time, the Union needed practical objectives to justify and secure its existence. The ins and outs of international exchange, therefore, became another key field of interest. The *Bulletin* not only published numerous articles about individual NGOs, but also helped to develop a separate science of internationalism. How to organize international (scientific) congresses was an important element therein. One of Speeckaert's first actions as secretary was to systematize the data about international congresses the Union possessed, in order to quantify the advance of international gatherings and thereby prove the urgency of collecting and spreading information. From the first issue, the *Bulletin* included an 'International Congress Calendar', listing the main NGO and scientific congresses in the months to come.

Speeckaert quickly realized that knowledge about organizing international congresses constituted a niche for the Union, which could provide it with a special position in the international arena. As a follow-up to his overview of congresses, he presented a checklist for congress organizers and participants, because despite their diverging themes – as he wrote – 'from an administrative and technical point of view all congresses have a certain number of commonalities'.[52] This continued to be a spearhead of Speeckaert's internationalist agenda. In 1951, he invited Gerhard Dehne, then director of the German-American Trade Promotion Company and the first German to contribute to the *Bulletin*, to outline the technique of organizing an international congress.[53] The article explained in detail what organizers needed to do and what participants were entitled to expect, from reduced prices of tickets to a decent signposting at the congress venue.

The editorial policy to leave politics out and concentrate on technical issues was only successful up to a point. With hindsight, it is abundantly clear that in the first years of publication (from 1948 to the early 1950s), the *Bulletin* and its successors heavily leaned towards the Western world, and favoured cooperation within UN-defined boundaries. There were hardly any attempts to look behind the Iron Curtain. Moreover, the Global South, as we would now define it, only slowly entered into the picture. Once the new statutes were approved in 1951, the Union began to look more actively for members outside Western Europe.

On the one hand, the emphasis on science and technical skills surrounding international exchange followed almost naturally from the nineteenth-century idea of scientific universalism that had driven Otlet and La Fontaine. In this sense, the Union followed its long-established project of peace, however utopian it was. Whereas, as Mark Mazower argues, this programme continued to exert a certain attraction in the interwar years, it was no match for the hard realism of the Cold War.[54] On the other hand, the Union's shift to 'technical' expertise was a conscious choice, fitting in with the widespread claim to non-political knowledge that was meant to hold the world together despite the political cleavages that emerged after the Second World War.[55]

Conclusion

The short period 1948–52 that we have highlighted in this chapter is in many ways representative for the decades that followed. The search for a place on the international scene was carried forward with scarcely slackened fervour. One cannot say that the Union's leadership lacked stamina. In 1956, a few years after Ording had disappeared from the scene, the Union obtained a substantial subsidy from the Ford Foundation that kept it going for some time. In 1957, Speeckaert was the driving force behind the publication of a chronological list of *The 1,978 International Organizations Founded Since the Congress of Vienna*, 'admittedly not a novel', but nevertheless 'a history of human relations *par excellence*', as he put it in the introduction.[56] In 1960 and 1964, this overview was followed by two other 'offerings to the Muse of History', chronological lists of all international congresses

in the periods 1681–1899 and 1900–14, still valuable sources for the historians of internationalism.[57]

This chapter has explored the ways in which the Union tried to carve out a distinct, allegedly non-political, role in a world full of tensions: tensions between international organizations, between states and their representatives, but also between personal visions of the role of the international sphere. On the one hand, the Union emphasized its 'technical' and supporting role, which came to the fore in studies on the history and present-day practice of international meetings, while on the other hand its board members and staff were campaigning for subsidies, and trying to strike deals with supranational organizations, governments and private, non-governmental organizations, including philanthropic foundations.

Seen through the lens of the UIA, transnationalism in the post-war settlement was clearly not a story of linear success. The Union was relatively disadvantaged, in particular with regard to subsidizers, as it did not have a specific cause to bring to the fore. As liaison office or clearinghouse, it had many competitors, and in many ways, it was crowded out by new initiatives linked to the UN. Without financial support from America the Union could not hope to grow substantially and, for example, open full-fledged offices in Geneva or New York. The old utopian goals of La Fontaine and Otlet had little chance of gaining mainstream support: after the Second World War, the heyday of this type of internationalism was definitely over. Nevertheless, the Union persisted, and managed to conquer and keep a special place on the global stage.

Notes

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